/Additional information on the "Tansoba" or Minister of War, may be found in category 645./

II. Military Organization

701 An army, properly speaking, with cadres and hierarchies, did not exist among the Mossi.

721 In the event of war, the Tansoba or Tampsoba (war minister) notified the canton chiefs who promptly assembled with all their able-bodied men and as many horsemen as possible.

705 The villages were charged with feeding the soldiers.

III. Judicial Organization

692 693 Justice was rendered in conformity with local customs which had been handed down from generation to generation and according to local practice.

1. By village chiefs, assisted by some of the elders, for petty affairs, pilfering, and insults.

2. The canton chief, assisted by his court dignitaries and the minister, ruled on matters concerning theft, adultery, and bodily attacks, as well as on other matters.

3. The Mogho Naba took cognizance of all matters of general interest, especially with crimes of assassination and murder. In theory, he could by himself pronounce the death sentence on the [565] nakomsé [descendants of Mogho Naba]. Contrary to general belief, a [56] kombéré (canton chief) also had the power of life and 661 death over his subjects. How many individuals have been put to death merely because they were wealthy! How many village chiefs have been killed by the canton chiefs over their territories without any intervention by the Mogho Naba! The nakomsé could 565 684 762 be executed, however, only for very serious crimes, such as adultery with a woman of the nobility. The guilty man was led into the bush by old nakomsé; they gave him a rope with which he was expected to hang himself and thus expiate his crime.

694 431 Justice was free; no fee was expected or assessed. The plaintiff, however, customarily presented the naba with a white or light gray rooster, accompanied by the traditional satchel containing from 200 to 1,000 cowries.

attempted adultery. This practice (poéré) found many victims, and its suppression by the French was a real service to the Mossi, who were formerly murdered for a trifle. An ogling glance at a chief's wife was punishable by death. A man who met one of the wives of the Mogho Naba on the road was executed along with the wife. If one met a napagha [royal wife], he left the path and took to the bush. The woman herself would run off and return to the road only when she was sure that the man was a long way off.

Such is naturally no longer the case, and the wives of the Mogho Naba on their way to the market at [66] Ouagadougou no longer expect not to be looked at or even jostled. I hasten to add, however, that the Mossi still retain great respect for them and will even swallow serious insults, such as tampiri, "bastard," from a napagha if they are so unlucky as to offend them.

(c) Daporé Naba, chief of the section of the free or house slaves. It was formerly the duty of the Daporé Naba and his followers to massacre any pages or other convicted persons whose execution had been ordered by the Mogho Naba.

(d) Bend'Naba, chief of the drummers of the Mogho Naba.

(e) Soré Naba (literally, "chief of the path"), the drummer who always accompanies the warriors and who, therefore, even in time of peace, is allotted a horse.

If the enemy appears to be winning during a battle, the Soré Naba kindles the courage of the warriors of the Mogho Naba and constantly asks for a head, m'data zougou. This means that he is asking each warrior to forget himself and to think only of victory. In order to have a victory, the enemy must suffer such losses that they decide either to retreat or to surrender. Thus, the expression m'data zougou implies ruthless slaughter.

(f) Tansoba or Tampsoba, the war chief. The Tansoba of the Mogho Naba lives in a small village, Moussa, in the province of the Baloum Naba.

[67] When there is friction between the Mogho Naba and one of his vassals and there seems to be no hope of agreement, the Mogho Naba sends to the Tansoba for logdo (warriors armed with arrows). The Tansoba at once proceeds to Ouagadougou and stops at Baoghin. The emperor assembles his ministers and the principal dignitaries of his court and says to them: "I never thought that chief X, to whom I myself gave the pougla (red fez) would dare to

701 oppose me. I therefore demand that his fez be returned to me."
687 To take away the fez of a naba is to dethrone him and reduce him to the level of his subjects.

The court officials, including the Tansoba, at once send emissaries to the chief at fault, asking him to choose between suicide (some take a poison called sounadré, while others kill themselves with a poisoned arrow) and war with the Mogho Naba.

If the chief is not prepared for such a summons, he kills himself, and the envoys return with the news.

669 If, on the other hand, he declares that he wants pouwega, that
701 is, war and a noble death, he sends back the representatives of the ministers. A few days later, with drums beating and the Tansoba, chief of the army, at its head, the whole warrior band appears before his walls.

The Tansoba sends the Samandé Naba to the chief to ask him to confirm his declaration of war. If the naba still wants war, he usually replies: "Ya yingri bala la ka sakénian."

The Tansoba withdraws, sending word to the chief [68] to expect him back on a stated day (seven or eight days later); this period of time will enable the chief to assemble his warriors also. When the day arrives, it is a merciless battle, a massacre.

727 Often the forces of the Mogho Naba are victorious, and in that event the slaves, livestock, and other property go to those who seized them. Only the corpses belong to the Tansoba.

701 If an arrow, even a poisoned one, wounds the Tansoba, he
577 must under no circumstances pull it out. Indeed, he must often endure thirst and hunger, and it is only when he is at rest in an enclosed place that the arrows are removed from his body. It should
[789] be noted that since the Tansoba's costume is virtually covered with amulets and other charms, he is not very likely to be wounded seriously by an arrow. This is not, of course, to belittle his bravery and composure in the face of danger, since he is expected
[762] never to retreat and, if the enemy is victorious, often prefers to kill himself rather than to report a defeat to the Mogho Naba.

644 There are, in addition to the foregoing, a great many petty naba whose role is not clearly defined and of whom it seems needless to speak.

644 conferred by the Mogho Naba on the canton chiefs.

292 554 With the exception of the Tenkodogo Naba and, more recently, the Boussouma Naba, neither of whom renders honors to the Mogho Naba, all ministers, other petty dima, and chiefs of Mossi cantons must take off his cap to greet the emperor.

576 554 645 (a) Between ministers. The Ouidi Naba does not remove his cap for any of his colleagues.

The Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, and Kamsaongo Naba are equals and greet each other with their caps on.

The Baloum Naba and Samandé Naba are also equals, and they do not take off their caps when greeting each other. However, they were required to remove their caps (pougla) and even to perform the kantissé in the presence of the three principal ministers.

[116] Next in importance are the Nemdo Naba or "chief of the meat" [in charge of slaughtering], the Poé Naba who is confessor to the emperor's wives, the Bend Naba, chief of the drummers, and, finally, a whole string of petty chiefs of no importance who can hardly be distinguished from the general populace and whom it would be fruitless to enumerate here.

The Poé Naba may keep his cap on when he is in the presence of the Baloum Naba or the Samandé Naba, but he must remove it for the other ministers and must even prostrate himself to perform the kantissé.

645 574 Not very long ago, when the province chiefs of Ouagadougou possessed neither comfortable houses nor furniture, the ministers rarely visited each other. I have even once seen a minister sit on the ground in order to give his seat to one of his colleagues.

645 Whenever matters came up which required a meeting, the ministers met at night in one or another of their homes without the knowledge of the public.

645 576 Today, the principal ministers have proper reception rooms. They can, therefore, remain seated when a more important colleague calls upon them and limit their special consideration of the visitor to offering him a Morris armchair or a folding chair.

701 554 645 The Tensoba, the minister of war, never takes off his cap for a minister or a canton chief. He does so only before the emperor.

701 554 645 Formerly, when war broke out and he was summoned to [117] Ouagadougou, the Tansoba [sic] assembled the principal ministers of the Mogho Naba at the home of his host, and his word was final.

Aside from this special case, he might call upon a minister, but then a servitor always brought along the cushion on which he would sit until the minister receives him in his private quarters. He was never received in public.

Once inside, the Tansoba occupied the best seat, and the minister got down on the floor and performed the Mossi salute.

In sum, the Tansoba was held in higher esteem than any other personage at the king's court.

(b) At the present time. Today ministers often visit each other. 645 574 Since they have rapid means of transportation at their disposal, they regularly go about without escorts. Most often their visits are made in order to deal with matters of general interest.

When a minister calls upon another minister, he keeps his cap 645 576 574 on and neither removes his shoes nor performs the kantissé. They are equals. This equality has been established by the local administration which has granted the same rights and salary to all. The minister shakes hands with his colleague and takes a seat. He is served copious quantities of beer, and then he takes his leave.

442 In spite of assertions to the contrary, the Mossi empire is politically disorganized. This accounts for the errors committed by the local administration and the [118] mistakes held against the ministers of the Mogho Naba who for a long time were granted too much power.

The Origin of Mossi Chiefdom (Legend), or the Way the Peulh, the Yarcé, and the Blacksmiths Salute Mossi Chiefs

773 184 576 The Peulh, the Yarcé, and, to a certain extent, the blacksmiths do not perform the kantissé (Mossi salute). They have a different way of saluting naba. A curious legend explains this phenomenon. However bizarre it may seem, it is not lacking in interest, and we shall tell it just as it was handed down to us.

1: Delobsom--154 I-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

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Tansoba
Mossi Minister of War.
From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

592 A typical soukala consists of the master's hut, a hut for each wife, one hut for the sheep and goats, another for the horse if he has one, a hut for the family mill, and, finally, a receiving hut with two doors sufficiently high to permit entrance without stooping and set sometimes [351] as an entrance way and sometimes within the cluster of huts. All these dwellings stand in a circle and are joined either by a cob wall or by /11/ mat fences taller than a man and held up by stakes. The master's hut, which usually stands beside the huts for the horses and sheep, is set off from the others by mats to insure his privacy. A low wall describes an arc within the inner courtyard; this is the kitchen [273 415] when it is not raining. Big jars of fired clay which are used to brew millet beer rest between the huts. In front of this cluster of huts, a shelter is built, usually high enough to permit standing and consisting basically of forked stakes with branches and séko resting upon them; this shelter serves as a refuge during the hot part of the day. Small boys and unmarried girls live with their mother, while older boys, servants, and slaves each have their separate huts which face the dwellings of the master and his wives.

The term yri or soukala covers this whole complex of structures. [591] Each soukala is a distinct unit, and, some time after they marry, the children build their own residence, set completely apart from that of their parents, often in another part of the village and sometimes in [361] another village altogether. The soukala stand fifteen to twenty meters apart, and, because of this, the villages, though adequately concentrated, cover a rather extensive area. The heads of cantons 342 place an ostrich egg at the peak of the roof on their own dwellings, [237] and some even build terraced huts higher than the surrounding dwell- [554] ings. They keep their riches in these huts and a prison in the base- [697] ment. An earthen stairway leads to the terrace where the master of [512] the house receives his guests when the sun begins to sink on the horizon.

721 These people, apparently so peaceful today, were formerly quite warlike and went off to war at the slightest pretext. Foreign to the land they now occupy, the Mossi must have conquered it by force of arms. The Tarik-es-Soudan /History of Sudan/ relates that the people of Yatenga seized Timbuktu in the fourteenth century, and in 721 the fifteenth they probably carried their incursions as far as Lake 701 Bébo and even Oualata. (4) The Mossi army was greatly feared.

4. Delafosse, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 80.

When a chief assembled his men, no one stayed behind. Only the women, children, invalids, and old men guarded the villages. Those who had no horses formed the infantry; they were armed with bow and arrows, usually poisoned, and a large sword hung from the shoulder. The horsemen carried a sword and a spear that rested on the tip of the foot and was held at mid-height with the right hand. The Mossi cavalry was especially numerous and fearful. The Moro Naba stayed home when his people went to war. He gathered together as many horses as possible, and, when horsemen lost their mounts, they came to him to get another horse and rejoin the fight.

The last wars before the French conquest of Koupéla, which we shall describe briefly, were civil wars that took place either between the people of Tenkodogo and those of Koupéla, or between the Mossi and the Gourmantché.

/12/ As generally happened in parallel cases, these wars followed the death of a naba, when several pretenders wrangled over the succession. It was in order to prevent such wars that only the immediate entourage of the naba was informed of his death. Outsiders were to remain in ignorance and believe the naba to be ill in his hut. The fatal news was spread only when the head of the family had gathered all that was necessary to honor the deceased in proper fashion by celebrating the kouré. (5)

5. Kouré, funeral ceremony in honor of the dead. See below.

When Naba Kidba died, leaving only a child of five or six to succeed him, a man from Kazem'bouanga who was powerful by virtue of his wealth and the number of his men decided to seize the throne. His followers had taken for themselves the name of Kazem'-bouanga and used to say: "Although the hyena (katré) is not the equal (zéma) of the donkey (bouanga), she nevertheless attacks and kills him if she meets him in the bush: similarly, although we are not as powerful as the inhabitants of Koupéla, we will manage to defeat them." And indeed, they marched on Koupéla. The prime minister, who bears the title, Saman'Naba (head of the outer courtyard), and whose own name was Wenkosgaraga, seized the child and fled with him to Sapara, the nearest village under the direct authority of the Moro Naba, located nine kilometers from Koupéla.

669 The last wars in the Koupéla area, therefore, were all civil wars that broke out upon the death of chiefs in the adjacent regions of Koupéla, Fada, and Tenkodogo.

721 The most usual theater of warfare, however, was Bousanga /Busansi/ country. If a Bousanga woman enslaved to the naba of Koupéla ran away, the naba demanded her return. If his request was turned down, this meant war. When the Mossi ran short of millet, when their herds had been decimated by an epizootic disease, or even simply when they wished to obtain slaves, the naba would assemble his ministers and direct them to raid the Bousansé. The Saman'Naba would take charge of the war. The Trabana, an experienced warrior, acted as chief of staff, and all the other chiefs, heads of cantons and villages; assembled their men. This was a festive occasion, and its abolition is still lamented by many people, especially among the chiefs.

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721 Everything was looted; the harvest and herds were shared, and the
567 population was reduced to slavery. Since we have mentioned slaves, we shall provide some details on the subject.

567 Slavery existed in Mossi country, but in a very mild form. The agricultural Mossi kept slaves to till their fields. It was to their advantage to treat them well and thus turn them to good account.

[435] Slaves constituted a source of wealth. An adult slave sold for 50 to 100 francs according to his strength, and no distinction was made between men and women. It was, therefore, unusual for a Mossi to kill a slave. Custom certainly sanctioned his right to do so, and no one, not even his chief, could call him to account for his act; his slave was his property, and he could do with him as he pleased. When he wished to get rid of a slave, however, he found it more lucrative to sell him. Besides, a slave should be attached to the household; a

[278] maltreated slave might run away, even at the risk of being caught and in spite of the drug he was forced to drink, which, like the Lethean waters, was supposed to cause him to lose his memory. On the other hand, a well-treated, well-fed slave had the hope of obtaining a wife and becoming in turn the master of a hut. When his master was pleased with him, when he had rendered an important service, he was sometimes given one of the master's daughters in marriage; this made him free, and his children were not born slaves. Slaves could also be freed if their family agreed to redeem them. They were freed most frequently by means of an exchange: one of their daughters, sisters, or nieces was given in their place. This custom persisted until quite recently.

631 The canton chiefs consult the oldest men in the village where they reside, and the village chiefs make no decisions bearing on the community without assembling the elders and listening to their advice.

Everything is carried out through the channels of the hierarchy. A province chief never transmits an order directly to a village ruled by a canton chief, but he advises the latter who notifies the village chief, and the village chief in turn calls the elders together, conveys the orders to them, and through them informs all his subjects. The orders passed down in this formal way are always carried out, but if perchance a canton chief should wish to disobey his province chief, he would be seconded by his people who recognize his authority before any other.

643 645 701 The last Moro Nabas had become to some extent idle kings. The protocol to which they were subjected by custom constantly encumbered them, not unlike European court etiquette. The Moro Naba was surrounded with a veritable court. As mentioned above, his High Council was composed of five chief ministers. To these should be added the Iman who represents the Moslems and who wields a certain influence, and the Teng'Soba. /Tr. Among the Mossi there is both a Teng'Soba, earth priest, and a Tan'Soba, war minister. It would seem that the latter is meant here./ The duties of the latter are quite specialized. He does not live in the same village as the Moro Naba, and he rules a canton. In case of war, he is consulted on the timeliness of the hostilities and on their chances of success. It devolves upon him at this time to make the proper sacrifices and to question the ancestral spirits. When war has been decided on, he takes command of the armies, and everyone, the ministers and the canton chiefs, must obey him. The Moro Naba remains in Ouagadougou.

644 839 A crowd of subalterns gravitate around these high dignitaries. The eunuchs are not very respectable people; sometimes habitual thieves were made eunuchs, as were, in general, those pages guilty of too much familiarity with the naba's wives. Some of them could reach a high position. The Kamisoro were always eunuchs, and several important cantons were set aside for them.

644 The pages are young boys, hand-picked from the country's most gifted children. They must serve the naba, and they bear the name soroné. The naba is never alone; he always has one or several pages by his side. One holds the fan, one stands near the monarch to help him shift his position, another takes care of his shoes, yet another of his scepter; the great cup-bearer constantly holds a gourd filled with strong millet beer and covered by a tray of artistically woven basketry.

681 As far as penalties were concerned, Mossi justice was stern and thus ran counter to the "patriarchal" justice of the Bobo, Gourounsi, etc. Murder was always punished by death (except in the case of nobles). As for thefts, physical aggression, and matters involving debts, they were adjusted in the manner described when we discussed the Yarsé, who were subject to Mossi justice since they were settled in their territory /not translated/. [754] We shall not, therefore, go over this again. Let us merely note that the Mossi, being fetishists, were familiar with matters of sorcery.

695 754 At Dembo, in the Yatenga area, when a young person died suddenly, "red powder" would be mixed in water and everyone would drink of it while swearing by Tensé /Tr.: the earth deities/ that he was innocent. The culprits would die. In other villages of the Yatenga area, people suspected of dealing in sorcery had to drink earth taken from the spot where sacrifices were performed and diluted in water. Those /581/ who refused to drink and swear were killed. At Kabayoro, a Mossi village located in the canton of Koumbili, if a man or woman suddenly ill, it was said that it was So-and-So, a sorcerer, who had eaten the soul. If the sick person died, his hands were washed with water and the liquid was given to the sorcerer to drink. He had to swear his innocence and invoke death unto himself if he should lie. If guilty he died; if innocent the water did him no harm. If he refused to swear and drink, he was put in irons and left there to die of hunger and thirst. The bara /soothsayer/ played no role in such occurrences. It was the sick person who pointed out the sorcerer. If the patient failed to designate someone, however, this meant that he was simply dying of illness. [761]

701 Now for the army and police. "In case of war," says Moulins, "the province chiefs summoned the canton chiefs, who hastened forth with all their able-bodied men. They all gathered behind the Tamsaba and followed him.

675 "As for policing, it was taken care of by village and canton chiefs, who arrested culprits with the help of their own followers, or, if necessary, by summoning the whole male population of the village."

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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the Tansoba, the members of the royal sub-lineage, and the district chiefs. The Tengsoba of the Ouagadougou area was also notified. Because he was a descendant of the aboriginal Ninisi population that "owned" the land, he supervised the burial ceremony.

The Mogho Naba's death was kept secret, and no mourning was allowed until the Crown Prince had arrived at the capital and the Tansoba had recruited an army to protect the realm against would-be usurpers of power. Then the cry was raised in the palace, to reverberate throughout the land, that "the fire had gone out." Once the ruler's death had been announced, the country was plunged into an interregnum, which was characterized by ritual and often by actual anarchy. The people in the towns immediately looted the markets and stole their neighbors' goods; the prisoners and captives in stocks were released by their guards; the nakomce in all the territories, districts, and villages subjected the local populations to robbery and pillage; and the members of the monarch's babissi began their intrigues for power. The traditional sanction for this anarchy was that only when people suffer during the breakdown of political control do they really appreciate the sovereign's role. The Mossi declare (with some truth) that no one was safe during the interregnum. However, as we shall see, the ruler was symbolically kept alive, and the country was never without effective political leadership.

When the Tengsoba arrived at the palace, he was joined by five hereditary funeral chiefs: the Pazany'tengsoba, the Tampouy Naba, the Benghin Naba, the Toghin Naba, and the Tanghin Naba. In the ceremony that followed, he gave permission for the royal grave to be dug. Meanwhile, the ruler's body was prepared for burial in the traditional manner by his female relatives and laid in state in the zongo. These women kept vigil over the body, shouting and weeping. Only the five ministers of the realm and the male members of the ruler's babissi were allowed to pay homage to the corpse within the zongo. All other mourners had to pay their respects to the monarch's eldest daughter, who, as Napoko, was dressed in the dead sovereign's clothes and sat in his place before the zongo. As her father's symbolic representative, she held daily court and received greetings and homage from all visitors until a new ruler was chosen. The drummer who sat by her side declared to all visitors, "You say that the Mogho Naba is dead! Well, who is that sitting there? Tell me! Is that not the Mogho Naba?"

The ruler was buried the day after he died, at the end of an elaborate ceremony. Libations were poured out to the ancient rulers, and sacrifices made to them. All the important officials and members of the royal mini-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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mal lineage segment except the pretenders to the throne shaved their heads as a sign of mourning. The royal pretenders donned sheepskin mantles to signify that they were willing to "eat the nam." Once the ruler had been buried, the country settled down to an uneasy peace until the eighth day, when the funeral ceremonies took place. In the meantime, the Napoko symbolically held daily court, and the Tansoba's army acted as a check against the attempts of ambitious princes to seize power by force of arms.

Two days before the funeral, the Kamsaogho Naba selected the Kourita, who was to replace the Napoko as the living symbolic representative of the dead Mogho Naba. The person chosen to be Kourita was usually a young son of the deceased king, but since this person was banished from the capital, most of the royal wives hid their young children or fled the palace with them.[33] Once the Kourita had been chosen, the Kamsaogho Naba performed a ceremony (similar to those connected with the divine kings of the Near East) during which the youth was given one of his father's horses, dressed in his father's clothes, and given his father's youngest widow as a wife. He was then paid the homage due the Mogho Naba, and after receiving many gifts from the dignitaries, he was banished from Ouagadougou forever. As he went through the country, he was treated like the Mogho Naba and given many wives and presents. If he should chance to return to Ouagadougou or see the new Mogho Naba, either or both of them would be killed by the ancestors. Many Mossi districts seem to have been founded by exiled Kouritadamba. These men were undoubtedly among the numerous "elder" sons of past kings who are said to have "refused" the nam and gone to live in the districts now governed by their descendants.

The choice and banishment of the Kourita heralded the funeral rites, which were characterized by numerous animal sacrifices to the ancestors in the name of the deceased ruler. On the afternoon of the first day of the funeral, the Crown Prince mounted a horse and left the palace by the women's door. The Napoko then took the bridle of her brother's horse and led him and an immense crowd of cavalry, armed warriors, and musicians around the palace walls three times. After the third round, the Napoko demanded that her brother give her a personal servant as a present; he hesitated, but finally granted her request. The Napoko was then lifted up by the warriors, who shouted as they carried her home. The funeral thus came to an end.

All Mossi potentates tried to emulate the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou in matters of pomp, ceremony, and government.[34] Their courts were inferior to his, but only because they were less powerful and less wealthy.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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Binger reports that the Mossi were divided into "a number of confederacies, more or less independent of each other, whose chiefs were vassals of Naba Sanum, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou." He found, nevertheless, that although the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou claimed suzerainty over the Yatenga, he could not grant travelers permission to enter that territory.[3]

Crozat, who visited the Mossi in 1890, just two years after Binger, was told repeatedly that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou had the right to control the destinies of all chiefs who claimed descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri. But he, too, found that the principalities were self-governing and mutually independent, and were united only by the weak bond that attached them all to Ouagadougou. Noting the claims of the people he encountered that Ouagadougou was still supreme, Crozat suggests that "time and circumstances have weakened this sovereignty. The ruler of Ouagadougou is regarded by the other chiefs merely as their senior and the head of their family. They seldom obey him, yet they recognize that in certain cases he has the right to give them orders." Like many Frenchmen who came after him, Crozat concludes, "One will be struck, as I have been, by this political organization in which the waning of the central authority has led to a true feudal system closely reminiscent of a certain period in our own history."[3]

Delafosse tells us that "the authority of the emperor [of Ouagadougou] does not seem to have been ignored within his borders except in very rare instances. The vassal kings, who were brothers, sons, or nephews of the emperor, usually obeyed him. In any case, the emperor did not interfere with the administration [of their territories], and required nothing from them except the payment of taxes and the raising of contingents for any expeditions he might have to organize against outside enemies (the emperors of Mali, Gao, or Segou; Moroccan pashas; etc.). In return, the emperor granted his support to those of his vassals who were unable to command the obedience of their subjects or tributaries."[4]

It appears, then, that although the independent rulers and autonomous princes sometimes recognized the supremacy (if not the seniority) of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, they were relatively free to rule as they wished. As possessors of the nam, they claimed and exercised the right to administer the peoples of their realms. It appears, furthermore, that the rulers of Ouagadougou seldom challenged the independence of their confreres in Yatenga, although the latter often disturbed them. For example, when Yatenga Naba Kango (ca. 1754-89) sacked and burned the Ouagadougou district of Yako for sheltering refugees from a civil war, the Mogho Naba did not come to the aid of the Yako Naba. Nor did he take offense when this chief, in order to regain his seat, was compelled to switch his

3. Finally, a third lot, composed of young girls and young boys, was distributed among the warriors and put into their charge. The boys will be employed until further notice as grooms to the warriors; later on, those who prove themselves useful and docile will be kept. The others will be sold at the first opportunity. The girls will be given in marriage to warriors who distinguish themselves.[26]

The military campaigns of the Mossi, in contrast to their slave-raiding expeditions, appear to have been well organized. When the Mogho Naba felt that a war was necessary, he summoned his five provincial ministers and the Tansoba to a parley. If war was decided upon, the Tansoba was given full charge of all operations. This man, chosen from a hereditary clan of warriors who lived in a village called Tansob'tenga in Sapone district, was listed among the Mogho Naba's courtiers but seldom appeared at court unless war was imminent. His duties as chief warrior were considered so dangerous that he constantly sought out religious practitioners for supernatural aid. Nevertheless, a war minister who was good and brave was not expected to live very long. If he did live to become gray-haired, the other courtiers made fun of him by pretending that his graying head could only be the result of his having carried a sheep captured in warfare on his head as a present to the ruler.

Once given a mandate for war, the Tansoba collected his magico-religious apparatus and prepared the requisite sacrifices. He then asked the provincial ministers to notify the district chiefs to assemble with their warriors under the leadership of the local Tansobadamba, who were often members of the Tansoba clan. When the district chiefs received this notice, they beat their *zongagondo* (war drums), and the local administrators sent orders for men to the village chiefs. The village chiefs, in turn, beat their war drums to summon their noble cavalrymen and commoner foot soldiers, who came armed with bows and arrows, spears, swords, and clubs, with or without iron tips. The tips of the sharp weapons were often covered with a vegetable poison derived from a shrub of the Strophanthus species. Some of the men also carried guns after firearms were introduced among the Mossi from the desert region and from the coast. Many carried rawhide shields.

As soon as the village contingents had assembled and had gathered their provisions, they marched to the district centers. Then they proceeded either to the place of battle or to Ouagadougou. In the latter case, they became part of the royal army and were joined by the forces of those princes who were prepared to honor their obligation to the Mogho Naba. For example, when the French invaded Ouagadougou in 1896, the Boulsa Dim sent his prime minister "at the head of an army to aid Mogho Naba

Wobogo. However, he did not have to intervene, because while still en route he heard that Ouagadougou had fallen."[25] Thanks to this type of aid, the Mogho Naba was able to gather quite a large army, a fact that contradicts Crozat's belief that the Mogho Naba was a "king without an army."[26]

The early Mogho Nanamse used to accompany their armies into the field, but this practice was later abandoned and was revived periodically only by the more adventurous rulers. (The last ruler to die in warfare was Mogho Naba Doulougou [ca. 1800].) However, it was the Mogho Naba's duty to greet the army when it came to Ouagadougou, to beat the royal war drum, and to turn the troops over to the Tansoba. This officer served as commander in chief of the army, and was assisted by the Gounga Naba, a provincial minister, who served as his aide-de-camp. The Gounga Naba was expected to die rather than retreat in battle, especially if the Tansoba was killed. Two other ministers, the Kamsaogho Naba and the Larhalle Naba, also accompanied the army. The later Baloum Nanamse did not venture into battle, because they had to attend to the personal needs of the Mogho Naba. In early times, however, they accompanied their sovereigns into battle and fought alongside them. The Ouidi Naba never went to war, because it was his duty to look after the kingdom. He had to ensure the interests of all the people even if the royal army was defeated, the country invaded, and the ruler killed or forced to flee. The Samande Naba went to war and served as chief of the infantry.

Scouts preceded each district contingent as the army marched off to battle. Within the contingent, the younger warriors marched in front, followed by older men. It was the duty of the more experienced warriors to make sure that the younger men did not break ranks and run under the stress of battle. Behind the foot soldiers came the cavalry, composed of nobles and of the few commoners who possessed horses. Behind these came the district chief, surrounded by his own palace guard. Several heralds known as *yumba* (sing. *yuma*) accompanied the district forces to exhort them to fight. As the men marched to battle the yumba shouted:

> Men! Your ancestors were not slaves. They were men. They were stronger than anyone else. They did not bathe with water; they bathed with blood. Do you wish to return home to drink millet water and eat bread? Never! A man does not eat bread or drink millet water; a man fights. Your ancestors were not afraid of anyone; you must not be afraid of anyone. Even if you are killed today, you must march ahead, beat your enemies, and take their villages. You must not be afraid!

Mossi armies on the march used scouts to keep a sharp lookout for the enemy or for any evidence that he was aware of impending attack. The tactics these scouts used to avoid detection, such as camouflaging themselves

726 628 669 For several years Mogho Naba Sanum had tried unsuccessfully to corner and defeat the rebellious Lalle Naba. Then one dry season the Mogho Naba called his Tansoba and said to him:

> "I want you to assemble immediately an army composed only of courageous men, to go to Lalle and bring me, alive, Tanga [also called Wobogo], chief of that district." Several thousand men, eager for glory, were gathered, and the army advanced against Lalle. It managed to burn Siguele, Tanga's residence, but did not capture the chief, who had fled to Koudougou. The royal army would have pursued him, but because the rainy season was imminent, and the men were needed to work in the fields, the army returned to Ouagadougou with a considerable amount of booty. The king received his war minister very kindly, because he foresaw the impending defeat of his obstinate enemy. The Mogho Naba then said to his warriors, "Go and cultivate your fields, but remember that as soon as the harvest has been stored, you have to capture Tanga. Regardless of the cost, I must have him, even if all of you must die."[22]

Mogho Naba Sanum died before he could capture Tanga, and the task fell to his successor, Mogho Naba Wobogo, who fared no better. One dry season, the royal army chased the rebel into Gurunsi territory but failed to catch him. They would have continued the chase, but "it was during the rainy season, and the royal army was disbanded."[23]

[648] Mogho Naba Wobogo never succeeded in capturing Tanga, because the French came in and conquered the Mossi. Nevertheless, the rebel did not go unpunished. After the French had completed their conquest they asked the Ouidi Naba what steps should be taken to ensure peace. He told them to capture and kill the Lalle Naba. This unfortunate chief was hunted down, captured, placed on an unsaddled colt, and brought to Ouagadougou, where he was publicly humiliated and then executed.

● 701 726 The episode with Tanga and the limiting of warfare to the dry season indicate that the Mogho Naba did not have the resources to maintain a standing army, and, therefore, had difficulty exerting his authority by the use of force. There is no doubt that the Mogho Nanamse were able to gather very large armies at specific times against both internal and external enemies, but when the planting period came the soldiers had to attend to their crops. This lack of resources also limited the power and authority of Mogho Nanamse over their autonomous subordinates. As a result, the Mossi kingdoms remained segmentary in nature, and became highly organized only at certain periods of their history.[24] The availability of military resources thus had a significant effect on the nature of the Mossi governmental and political system.

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worked for the Mogho Naba in and around the palace courtyard, and in the fields. They also kept his herds and provided him with animals from their own herds. Like the Dapore, they were seldom sold, but they often had to give their sons and daughters to the Mogho Naba.

The last group of persons who contributed their services to the Mogho Naba were the Kamboinse. Their origin is also unclear. Most of my respondents claimed that the Kamboinse and their chief first came to Ouagadougou from the direction of the Gold Coast, that they bore guns, and that they offered their services as guards to the Mogho Naba.[21] Later on, the sovereign allegedly assigned slaves to the Kamboinse unit, with the result that the entire group eventually took on a serf-like character. The Kamboinse guarded the Mogho Naba's palace and seized for him the goods of persons whom he condemned to death.

The services performed for the Mogho Naba by his pages and other youthful retainers also contributed significantly to the support of his administration. We have already seen how these young men and boys took care of his every need and functioned as important messengers within the royal household. The Mogho Naba also had control over the daughters of his serfs, whom he used to obtain revenue from aliens and subjects alike. Periodically, the Mogho Naba gave one of these girls as pughsiudga to a man, thus obligating him to render goods and services to the court. Moreover, the man had to return the eldest daughter he had by this wife to the Mogho Naba as a future pughsiudga. In this way, the sovereign had a revolving store of women through whom he could bind men to himself in a nexus of obligations, and from whom he eventually received additional women.[22]

The provincial ministers of the Ouagadougou kingdom occupied such a strategic position within the central administration that anyone rendering gifts or tribute to the Mogho Naba always gave presents to them as well. Their main source of revenue, however, came from the villages under their direct control, and from the retainers who lived in their compounds and in their wards in the capital. The economic relations between the ministers and their villages were similar to those between the district chiefs and their villages, and will be discussed below. The retainers, serfs, and slaves who served these ministers provided them with many of the services their counterparts rendered to the Mogho Naba. They kept their houses in repair and provided them with firewood and with fodder for their horses. Many of them also cultivated fields for their masters. Whenever the ministers needed extra goods or services, they called on those persons who lived in their compounds or in their wards. For example, hun-

eight soldiers to reconnoiter the town. (This slave might be the emissary referred to by Noll.) The people who had gathered for the market day were unaware that an attack on the capital was imminent, and were frightened when they saw the soldiers. A deaf man named Wanda, who was a tax collector in the market, went home for his gun and his horse in the belief that the Mogho Naba's army was on the march. He went out to meet the French and was killed. Later that day the Mossi army, under the command of Koabga, the Kamsaogho Naba, and the Tansoba, launched an attack on the invaders. Their flint guns, spears, clubs, and poisoned arrows were powerless against superior French arms. Dim Delobson states that when the French guns began to fire, "It was a thorough stampede; all tried to save themselves and fled in all directions. Some of them, in their precipitous flight, even rode past their homes and villages." According to local tradition, one of the first persons to run was the Tansoba, who had once pledged to defend the Mogho Naba to the death. About five o'clock that afternoon, the French flag flew over Wobogo's palace.[42] The Mogho Naba and his army did not regroup until they reached a village called Bagare, some 25 miles southeast of the capital.

Three days later, Wobogo marched back toward Ouagadougou at the head of a large army in an attempt to crush the relatively few enemy soldiers. But Voulet's men chased him toward the south. It was either during this battle or after he returned from the pursuit of Wobogo that Voulet burned Ouagadougou to punish its inhabitants for helping their sovereign. Meanwhile, Wobogo had regrouped his forces, and although Voulet pursued him and burned Mane and Boussouma, where the sovereign had sought refuge, Wobogo fled rather than sign a treaty with the invaders. This attitude surprised and annoyed Voulet, who is quoted as saying:

> Although we represent peace, safety, security on the trade routes, and thus ease of communication . . . nothing could prevail against their fear that in accepting us, they would also have to accept the suppression of slavery: the principal activity around which everything revolves in this backward country. The majority of the population are kept well in hand [by their chiefs]. Although the central power (I speak of the authority of the chief of Ouagadougou vis-à-vis the other chiefs, his vassals) is *relatively* weak, each of these vassals, on the other hand, is thoroughly obeyed in his own territory. There is not one village chief who would dare to receive us if his superior forbade him to do so. We are told that if anyone permitted himself such a liberty, he would have his head cut off the moment our backs were turned.[43]

After being routed by Voulet's forces for the second time, the Mogho Naba sent requests for aid to many of the autonomous Dimdamba and to his district chiefs. The Dim of Boulsa sent an army under the command

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of his prime minister, Rimsekedo, and the chiefs of the districts of Bere, Djiba, Manga, Nobere, and Rissouma led their armies to join the royal forces at a rallying point near the White Volta River. Meanwhile, Voulet had expended most of his supplies in trying to bring Wobogo to terms. Having failed to do so, he tried to solve the problems of Mossi government by electing Wobogo's younger brother, Mazi, as ruler of Ouagadougou and emperor of the Mossi. Voulet then marched off to his base at Bandiagara by way of the White Volta, hoping to catch and defeat Wobogo's forces along the way. The monarch fled at Voulet's approach, so that when the forces of Rimsekedo and of the district chiefs arrived at the rendezvous, "they found only the droppings of Wobogo's horses," and angrily returned home. Naba Kaglere, chief of Nobere, was allegedly so infuriated by Wobogo's cowardice that he withdrew his support from his sovereign. However, the chiefs of Djiba and Rissouma remained faithful to their ruler, and the Dim of Mane attempted to intercept Voulet's advance toward Bandiagara, only to be defeated by the French, who burned his villages.

When Wobogo heard that the enemy had left the country, he ordered that the roof of his palace be restored, resumed his traditional duties such as appointing to office the heirs of district chiefs who had died during his absence, and prepared to return to the capital. In the interim Mazi had died (under suspicious circumstances, according to the French), thus leaving the people of Ouagadougou without a ruler and eager for Wobogo's return.[44] Unfortunately for the Mogho Naba, Voulet unexpectedly returned to Ouagadougou in December 1896, thus preventing Wobogo's return. Voulet, too, was in a predicament, for he had few allies among the Mossi, and Wobogo was firmly entrenched near Kombissiri in the south. To prevent many chiefs from coming to the aid of their sovereign, Voulet immediately launched an offensive against Wobogo. He burned several villages along the way, and received the allegiance of Wobogo's two brothers, Tarbega and Mahmadou, of two of his sons, and of two of his important vassals, the Mane Naba and the Boussouma Naba. But he failed to find the sovereign, who had fled to the region of Djiba and Nobere. Voulet then turned back to Ouagadougou, which he reached about a month later, in January 1897. On the following day, the Ouidi Naba surrendered, and two days later the Tansoba followed suit. Voulet now formally deposed Mogho Naba Wobogo. A week later, he obtained the permission and cooperation of the traditional electors and placed Wobogo's brother Mahmadou on the throne as Mogho Naba Sighiri. This sovereign then "solemnly signed a treaty which placed his kingdom under the protection of France."[45]

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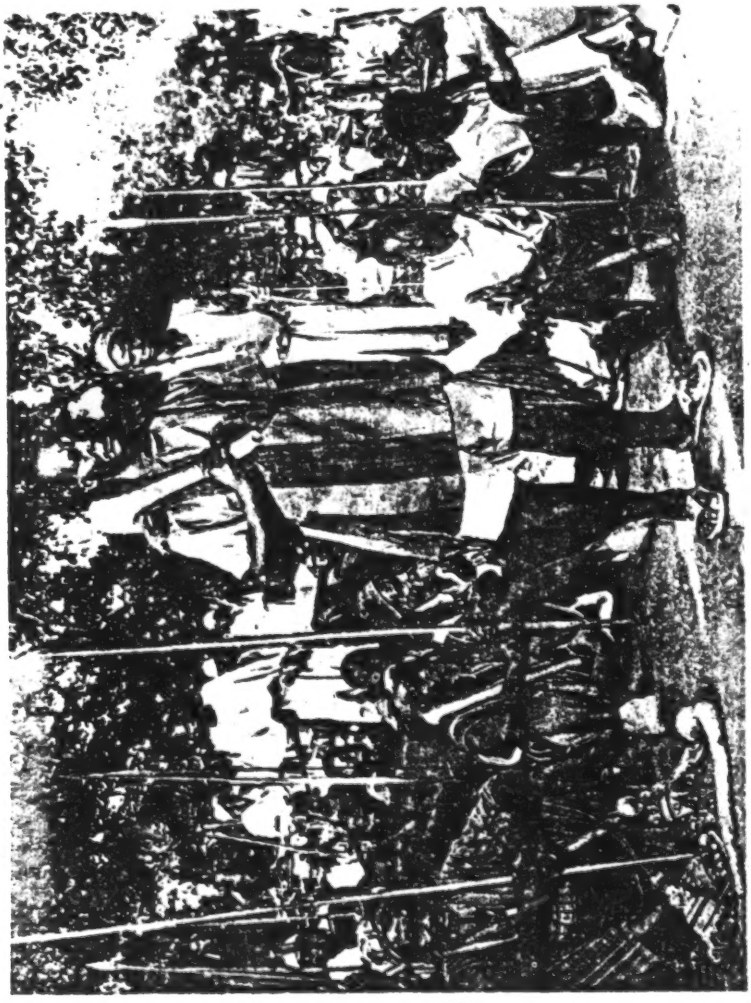

Mogho Naba Kougri's warriors, many bearing traditional weapons, respond to their sovereign's call for aid against the new French administration.

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